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Carter Arms Sales Policy Runs Into Flak

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Some administration officials are beginning to wonder if President Carter's policy limiting arms sales abroad isn't in for stricter enforcement — by Congress.

The Carter administration's most attention-getting problems in the areas of arms transfers have not been with those it turns down but rather with those it favors.

The latest reminder came yesterday when, as expected, the administration announced it was resubmitting to Congress a proposal to sell a highly sophisticated air defense system to Iran.

The \$1.2 billion deal would include seven jet transports crammed full of U.S. radar and computer gear designed to detect and track enemy air attacks, as well as to direct friendly air forces.

AFTER MEETING stiff congressional opposition on a number of grounds this summer, Carter withdrew the proposal with a pledge to

meet requests for changes in the deal to calm a number of fears.

For one thing, the White House announced that Adm. Stansfield Turner, director of central intelligence for Carter, has substantially modified his view of the risk that the Soviet Union would somehow steal the system's secrets if it were sold to neighboring Iran.

For another, the Pentagon has produced a new study which says that the system, called AWACS for airborne warning and control system, is the most cost-effective way to maintain radar surveillance and tracking ability over and around Iran.

Turner's earlier fears about security risks greatly hampered the administration's attempt to win acquiescence for the sale. Now, the administration believes Turner is back on the reservation and the change will mean a better chance of approval.

Some officials, however, are speculating privately that the attention-getting possibility of espionage might have masked deeper concerns among congressmen over the Carter arms sales policy.

"IN THE HOUSE and the Senate, too, many were opposed to the sale because they are against any more arms transfers," said one official.

Members of Congress, this official went on, are recalling Carter's pledge to reduce arms sales and to avoid introducing new levels of high technology in weaponry around the world. Stopping the sale of AWACS to Iran would be one place to put such a policy into effect, since even the Carter administration acknowledges that the sale is an exception to Carter's policy.

Nor is the AWACS resubmission the only current proposal that might excite the opposition. The administration yesterday announced that it wants to sell Egypt 14 more C130s, propeller-drive troop and cargo carriers, in addition to the six Egypt has already purchased from the United States.

The Pentagon also announced a proposal to sell Egypt a number of robot aircraft used for photo-reconnaissance. According to the administration, the drones would be used to keep watch over the Sinai buffer zone that was authorized by the accords

reached with Israel in the wake of the October 1973 Mideast war.

THE ADMINISTRATION privately justified the sale to Congress by saying that in seeking a negotiated peace following that war, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat "fundamentally altered the situation in this region as well as the position of the United States."

The administration said it wanted to make the sale "to signal to him our concern for Egypt's needs and to symbolize for Sadat's policies."

Any sale of military equipment to Egypt is likely to be controversial with Israel's supporters in the Senate. Considerable opposition has already been stirred by the administration's intention to sell highly capable F15 fighters to Saudi Arabia.

While congressional handicappers now believe the AWACS sale will escape Congress' condemnation, observers wonder if the cumulative effect of all the controversial sales pushed by Carter won't generate sub-